



# **GSA Carbon Footprint & Green Procurement Tool Scope 3 Commuter Survey FAQ's**

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## General Questions about Scope 3 Commuter Survey

### 1.) What is the purpose of the Scope 3 Commuter Survey?

The Scope 3 Commuter Survey was developed through collaboration between the White House CEQ, DOT's Volpe Center, DOE FEMP, and GSA to help federal agencies calculate their commute-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as required by President Obama's Executive Order 13514, *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance*.

This survey is used to calculate the GHG emissions associated with federal employee commuting to and from the workplace, compare emissions across agencies, and make decisions about how to reduce emissions in the future.

To ensure a consistent reporting approach for an entire agency, the survey may be deployed agency-wide, but it cannot be deployed by just individual operating components (e.g., Bureaus, campuses, etc.).

### 2.) Who should complete the Scope 3 Commuter Survey?

All federal employees at participating agencies are encouraged to complete the Scope 3 Commuter Survey during their designated survey deployment week if they are selected to do so. Employees at participating agencies may be invited to participate in the survey via a survey invitation email during their deployment week. Larger agencies may be sending survey invitations to a limited group of randomly selected employees, so not all federal employees will receive an invitation, even if their agency is participating.

### 3.) Should federal contractors participate in the survey?

For the FY2010 and FY2011 Scope 3 Commuter Survey deployments, federal contractors are exempt from the survey and their results should not be included. If a federal contractor begins completing the survey, s/he should self-identify as a contractor in Question #3, and his/her survey will terminate after that question, excluding any results from the final reports.

### 4.) What is the role of the Survey Administrator?

The Survey Administrator serves as the primary point of contact between the GSA Carbon Footprint Team and the surveying agency. The Survey Administrator will gather required agency information (i.e. email addresses) for a successful survey deployment.



For a list of required information, see *“Questions about Required Agency Information”* below.

### **5.) Will survey responses remain anonymous?**

Yes, all survey responses will remain anonymous. Each survey participant will receive a unique URL link that includes a survey identification code. All stored results will be associated with this survey identification code to preserve anonymity (and to ensure all survey respondents only complete the survey once).

### **6.) What are the restrictions on a survey deployment week?**

Commuter surveys are typically deployed on a Monday through Friday during a week that does not include any Federal holidays. Survey deployments are aligned with the 5 day work week. Based on previous survey deployments, GSA received feedback that users tend to remember the survey end date when it is aligned with the end of the workweek (i.e. on Friday) instead of the middle of the week, so survey deployments are scheduled for Monday through Friday.

### **7.) What options exist for using statistical sampling?**

Agencies are encouraged to use statistical sampling, especially for agencies over 40,000 employees, to reduce the agency-wide labor burden associated with taking the survey. GSA has successfully used statistical sampling for commuter survey deployments for many agencies. Sampling methods for the survey include three options:

Option 1: Agency-wide Sampling. In this approach, the entire agency is treated as a single population. GSA will establish a sample size based on the total number of employees in the agency and a desired accuracy/error level. This approach is preferable when an agency wants to calculate commuter GHG emissions through a survey while also reducing time burden on the labor force. For sampling, GSA typically recommends a +/- 2% error rate within a 95% confidence interval to establish a sample size. As an example, if an agency has 50,000 employees, it would need to survey 2,291 people to be 95% confident that the results are accurate within +/- 2% of the results that would be obtained by surveying the entire agency. These accuracy/error rates can be adjusted to suit agency needs.

Option 2: Stratified Sampling. In this approach, GSA establishes sub-populations (typically Bureaus or other administrative units) and generates sample sizes based on the number of employees in those sub-populations and a desired error level. This approach is preferable when the sub-populations (e.g., Bureaus) have different



commuting policies that may result in differences in emissions between the sub-populations. For sampling, GSA typically recommends a +/- 2% error rate within a 95% confidence interval to establish a sample size within each sub-population. As an example, if an agency has 50,000 employees who are divided equally into 12 Bureaus with 4,166 employee per Bureau, it would need to survey 1,523 people in each Bureau to be 95% confident that the results in that Bureau are accurate within +/- 2% of the results that would be obtained by surveying the entire Bureau. In this example, a total of 18,276 people would be surveyed. These accuracy/error rates can be adjusted to suit agency needs.

Option 3: No Sampling. In this approach, all employees within an agency will be invited to take the survey. This approach is preferable when an agency would like to obtain the most statistically accurate results that they can achieve. The accuracy/error rate using this method will vary based on the number of survey responses.

## 8.) How will users be notified about the survey?

GSA provides three (3) deployment email templates to all Survey Administrators to notify users about the survey:

Primary Notification Email: This email is sent directly from the Survey Administrator (or designated agency administrator) to agency staff prior to the survey deployment. GSA provides this sample language for the convenience of the Survey Administrator, but the Survey Administrator is responsible for making all modifications and sending to agency staff.

Invitation Email: This email will be sent individually to all survey recipients on the survey start date, and it will include each user's unique URL link. The invitation emails will be sent automatically from the GSA Carbon Footprint Tool servers from [commutersurvey@gsa.gov](mailto:commutersurvey@gsa.gov). The Survey Administrator will be able to customize some portions of this text for his/her agency prior to deployment.

Reminder Email: This email will be sent individually to any survey recipients who have not completed the survey, and it will include each user's unique URL link. GSA recommends sending reminder emails on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> days of the survey deployment. The reminder emails will be sent automatically from the GSA Carbon Footprint Tool servers from [commutersurvey@gsa.gov](mailto:commutersurvey@gsa.gov). The Survey Administrator will be able to customize some portions of this text for his/her agency prior to deployment.



### 9.) How are results calculated?

The survey calculations follow industry best practices such as those established by the DOT's Volpe Center, and results are calculated to demonstrate alignment with the EO 13514 requirements and DOE FEMP Reporting Portal.

For all survey respondents, the GSA Carbon Footprint Tool calculates the average distance traveled per day using each transportation method and then multiplies these daily results by 230, the number of working days in a year, to calculate the average distance traveled by each respondent for each transportation method in a year. (While there are a total of 260 weekdays in a year, there are only 230 working days once vacation/sick days weekends and holidays are deducted.)

For survey non-respondents, the GSA Carbon Footprint Tool assumes each non-respondent drove alone in a car each day, and s/he drove a distance that is equivalent to the average number of miles driven by all respondents who drove alone in a car. This approach is consistent with industry best practices to address the self-selection bias in which individuals who use alternative methods of transportation (e.g., biking or public transit) are more likely to complete the survey than those who drive alone.

If the agency is using a sampling method, the results of the respondents and non-respondents are extrapolated to the agency population size.

Finally, the GSA Carbon Footprint Tool calculates the sum of all of the respondents, non-respondents, and extrapolation to arrive at the final results.

### 10.) Are the results statistically significant?

The final accuracy/error rate will depend heavily on the survey response rate. GSA recommends the use of a sampling methodology that achieves a +/- 2% error rate within a 95% confidence interval. GSA will work closely with every agency in an effort to achieve high response rates and increase the accuracy of survey results.



## Questions about the Scope 3 Commuter Survey Questions

### 11.) What should I enter for the “Please enter your organization code or other office identification code used by your agency” portion of Question #1?

Since the input for this question varies by agency, you will receive specific instructions for this question from your Survey Administrator or in your survey invitation email. If you did not receive specific instructions, you may leave this question blank and the survey will allow you to proceed.

### 12.) What should I do if my site does not appear in the drop-down list for Question #2? (NOTE: This FAQ only applies to surveys that use a site list for Question #2 instead of zip codes.)

If your site does not appear in the drop-down list, double-check your zip code to ensure it has been entered correctly. If your site still does not appear, select “Site not found” from the drop-down list.

### 13.) Why do I have to select my method of commute separately for each day in Questions #4 and #7?

This approach increases the accuracy of the survey results by reducing the number of errors or misunderstandings that can occur when the data is being selected. For example, by asking for the daily miles traveled using each method, the survey prevents users from misunderstanding the question and entering weekly mileage by mistake. In addition, since some commuters use multiple methods of transportation in a week or in a day, this survey format allows commuters to provide a more complete response.

### 14.) How should I answer Question #4 of the survey if I participate in a 5-4/9 plan in which I only work every other Friday?

Please select the option that most accurately represents your commute pattern for last week. For example, if your day off fell on Friday of last week (the week before the survey deployment), please select “N/A: Regular day off (4/10 or 5-4/9 plan)” for Friday. If your day off was not last week, please select the commute method you used each day.

### 15.) How should I answer Question #4 if I participate in a “slugging” program?

“Slugging” is a type of informal carpooling. Please select “Carpool” for days in which slugging is used. It does not matter if you are the driver or the passenger.



**16.) Is it possible to record distances that I commute on a Saturday or Sunday?**

No, it is not currently possible to record distances for commutes on Saturday or Sunday. If your agency includes many employees with a 7 day work week, we recommend including sample language in the Invitation and Reminder emails as follows:

*The commuter survey asks for your commuting patterns for Monday-Friday since most federal employees follow this traditional schedule. If your work schedule does not follow this pattern, please complete the survey in a manner that best reflects the 5 days during the week that you commute to work. For example, if you commute to work on Saturday-Wednesday, please disregard the "Monday", "Tuesday", "Wednesday", "Thursday", and "Friday" labels on Questions #4 and #7, and complete the survey for the commute you use during your Saturday-Wednesday schedule.*

**17.) I was unable to complete the survey in one sitting. Can I still finish it? Do I have to start over from the beginning?**

You may return to the survey to finish it at any time by following the link that was provided to you in your invitation email. Your responses will be saved for any questions you completed before leaving the survey.

**18.) What questions can my agency include in the survey?**

The Scope 3 Commuter Survey consists of a set of 8 mandatory questions and a set of 22 optional questions that can be included or excluded from the survey. The wording of these questions and the options available cannot be changed. The list of these survey questions can be found at: <https://www.carbonfootprint.gsa.gov/?Page=surveyRequest>

**19.) Can my agency add customized questions to the survey?**

Agencies may create up to three agency-defined questions. These questions can be formatted to allow answers as text box inputs, radio buttons, multi-select checkboxes, or drop-down boxes.



## Questions about Required Agency Information

### 20.) What information does GSA need from each agency to deploy the commuter survey?

The “Scope 3 Commuter Survey Deployment Checklist” outlines all of the items that GSA needs from each agency in order to successfully deploy the commuter survey.

### 21.) Why does GSA need a list of individual email addresses for all survey employees?

For each survey participant, GSA generates a unique URL link that includes a survey identification code. This identification code preserves anonymity while improving the integrity of the results by only allowing respondents to complete the survey one time. GSA needs a list of individual email addresses in order to generate the proper number of identification codes and transmit the unique URLs to each user individually.

### 22.) Does GSA need to coordinate the survey deployment with my agency IT staff?

Ideally, the Survey Administrator will be able to coordinate the survey deployment with agency IT staff to ensure agency servers will not block the survey URL or treat survey invitation emails as SPAM. Since thousands of email invitations may be sent from GSA to the agency’s servers within a short period of time, GSA asks agency IT staff to confirm that the deployment email origination address ([commutersurvey@gsa.gov](mailto:commutersurvey@gsa.gov)) is added to the agency’s “whitelist” and that the survey URL will not be blocked.





## Questions about System Security

### **23.) Who will have access to our email address list? How will our email address list remain secure?**

Your agency email address list will be made available only to GSA staff including contractors who are directly supporting your agency's commuter survey deployment. GSA follows a predefined protocol on the handling of all email lists and this protocol dictates that each email list is handled by as few people as possible and that the handling of the email list is controlled by contractor staff with security clearances. As indicated in FAQ 5, the survey responses remain anonymous and no personally identifiable information is captured or can be traced to any email address.

The GSA Carbon Footprint Tool is hosted by GSA's contractor, Noblis, in a DoD secured facility that has been granted an Authority to Operate (ATO) at the FISMA low level. Your agency email address information is only used during the survey setup and deployment process. Immediately upon the completion of a survey deployment, all email addresses are purged from any laptops or servers that stored this information.